A SERMON

Preached before the

KING

AT

NEW-MARKET

April 2. 1676.

BY

SAMUEL SCATTERGOOD M. A.
Fellow of *Trinity College* in *Cambridge.*

Publiſhed by his MAJESTIES *ſpecial Command.*

CAMBRIDGE,
Printed by *John Hayes*, Printer to the *Univerſity*, 167[illegible].

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Job 28. 28.

And unto Man he ſaid, Behold the fear of the Lord that is Wiſdom, and to depart from evil is Underſtanding.

THere is nothing that Man doth more earneſtly purſue and hunt after then Wiſdom and Underſtanding; and there is nothing that God is more deſirous that he ſhould obtain. And yet ſuch is the obſtinacy of our will, and the perverſeneſs of our Nature, that when God ſhews us the true wiſdom and the way to it, we will not follow his directions, but ſeek for it according to our own fanſie, where it is never to be had: And then no wonder if in the end we prove ſuch fools, as to reap no other fruit of our labour but ſhame and repentance: no wonder if we meet with death

where we expected life, and find destruction in those things wherein we sought for happiness. For it hath ever been the devils policy, even from the very beginning of the world, so cunningly to counterfeit this inestimable Jewel, that if we have not constant recourse to Gods Word, to trie every thing we take for wisdom by that unerring touchstone, and weigh it carefully in the ballance of the Sanctuary, we may easily be deceived with a worthless trifle instead of this pearl of great price; we may embrace a shadow for a substance, and court ignorance and folly instead of Wisdom and Understanding. Thus he overthrew our first Parents, by perswading them to aspire to a greater measure of Knowledge then God had thought fit to bestow upon them; and he hath all along made use of the same temptation to the ruine of their Posterity. He found it successfull then, and it hath been so ever since; and among all his wiles and stratagems he hath none by which he can so easily inveigle us as this; no bait so fair, so taking, and so universally prevalent among the Sons of men as this of Wisdom and Knowledge. Nay I may in some sense say that he hath no temptation at all by which he can move us but this alone. For did he not perswade

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men into a good opinion of themselves, and that their wicked actions were wise and prudent, he could never induce them to embrace his temptations: and therefore he sutes them to every particular mans humour and disposition. He offers not the ladder of Honour to the Sluggard, upon which he knows the ambitious man will venture his life and fortunes; but he brings a pillow to the one, and a scepter to the other: he propounds ease, and idleness, and sleep to the former, and perswades him that wisdom shall court him in a dream; and he shewes the latter *all the kingdoms of the World and the glory of them*, and tells him that Wisdom is to be found no where but in the highest honour and most splendid preferments. He tells the Miser that it consists in riches, and that he must hoard it up in his coffers, he tells the Glutton that he shall find it in a dainty dish, and he bids the Revenger drink it up in the blood of his enemies.

But above all other persons, those who one would think should be the best able to resist his temptations (I mean the Learned) are often times most easily foiled by him. Their great learning and parts, most excellent endowments, which might be very serviceable to Gods glory and the good of

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his Church, he perſwades them to abuſe in the maintaining of wrangling Diſputations, and unneceſſary (and ſometimes dangerous) Controverſies. By which means he rents the ſeamleſs coat of Chriſt, divides the Church into Schiſms and Factions, and ſhakes all into diſorder and Confuſion. He tells them, that to know Chriſt and him crucified is but a mean piece of knowledge, fit onely for men of weaker capacities to reſt content with. But as for them, he would have them ſore aloft, and employ their time and ſtudy about deeper contemplations: examine what God was doing before he created the World: ſcan all the intrigues of his Providence: ſound the fathomleſs abyſs of his unſearchable Decrees: rifle, if it were poſſible, his moſt ſecret cloſet, and curiouſly prie into thoſe things which are concealed from Angels. This ſaith he, is Wiſdom, and this is Underſtanding worthy to be acquired by men of Parts and Learning.

And this vain and wicked Curioſity, this unlawfull thirſt after that Knowledge, which is hidden from us, was the occaſion of theſe words of my Text, and indeed of this whole Chapter. For *Jobs* three Friends were very bold, and fooliſhly poſitive in their aſſertions concerning Gods Decrees.

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They thought it was altogether inconsistent with his infinite Goodness to suffer either the Righteous to be in adversity, or the Wicked to prosper in this world. And therefore when they considered that their friend *Job*, who but a while before had been a mighty Prince, was all of a sudden reduced to most extream poverty; and as it were in a moment, by unparalleled disasters, deprived of his whole Estate, his Children, his health, and brought down from a Throne to a Dunghill, they stood all amazed and astonished at his unexpected calamity; and instead of performing the duty of Friends, and comforting him in his affliction, they most unfriendly and uncharitably censure him. And as if they had been of Gods privy Counsell, had stood by him, and throughly understood the whole design of his Providence in afflicting so severely his servant *Job*, they presently conclude him to be a most grievous sinner; and that whatsoever specious and fair shews he had made of Righteousness and Integrity, yet they were all false and counterfeit, and that God had now unmasked him, and by his heavy judgements plainly discovered to all the world that he was a most notorious Hypocrite, and that he had marked him and

ſet him up as a Butt againſt which he would ſhoot all the Arrows of his fury and indignation.

All this *Job* hears and endures with patience. He was ſenſible enough that God had afflicted him, and he knew too that it was not for his Hypocriſie, but for ſome ſecret end beſt known to his infinite Wiſdom: and therefore he enquires not after it, but labours to perform his own Duty, and to receive evil from the Hand of God, if he ſends it to him, as well as good, and patiently to bear whatſoever burden he laies upon him; as one that was well aſſured that though *in a little wrath he hid his face from him for a moment, yet with everlaſting kindneſs he would have mercy on him.*

This is all the wiſdom he aſpires to, he meddles not with Gods ſecret counſell, nor ſearches after the Knowledge which he knew was *too wonderfull for him.* And what he himſelf practiſes he adviſes his Friends here to practiſe too, and blames them for pretending ſo fondly to give an account of the actions of Gods Providence, and for thirſting after that Wiſdom which they can never attain to. 'Tis the ſubject of this whole chapter, in which he ſets forth moſt eloquently the impoſſibility of ever acquiring this Wiſdom,

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which God hath reserved to himself as his own peculiar prerogative. For when he hath made a carefull enquiry after it throughout all the world; ransak'd the Air, the Earth, the Sea; nay even hell it self, and yet not found it: he concludes in the 23 Verse of this Chapter that *God understands the way thereof, and he knows the place thereof.*

God understands it, and he onely understands it; and he will have none elſe to understand it, or meddle with it. He hath ordained another sort of Wisdom for Man to seek after, which though it will not satisfie the fond curiosity of every inquisitive Brain that is still longing for the forbidden Fruit, yet it will be sufficient to make every one that attains to it wise unto Salvation. And this is the Wisdom which is here recommended to us in my Text with this emphaticall word *Behold* before it, to command our attention and to make us rouse up our spirits, and turn away our eyes from those Vanities and that false Wisdom which we are too ready to follow after, and fix them upon the true. *And unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is Understanding.*

In the handling of which words I shall endeavour, First to shew what is here meant

by *the Fear of the Lord.* Secondly, what it is to depart from evil. And thirdly prove that to depart from evil in the Name and Fear of the Lord is the greateſt wiſdom that Man is capable of. Of theſe in order.

And Firſt of the fear of the Lord. There is a fear of the Lord which is not Wiſdom, nor Underſtanding: nay it is Folly, it is Madneſs, it is Sin. I mean ſuch a fear as is peculiar only to wicked men; a fear that repreſents God to them frowning, armed with thunder, and ready to take vengeance on their crimes: a very unwelcome gueſt in their Breaſts, which ſhews them as it were Hell in epitome, and gives them a taſte here of thoſe eternall torments which ſhall be their portion hereafter. This is the *evil ſpirit from the Lord* which troubled *Saul.* This is that fear which *looſed the joints of* Belſhazzars *loyns, and ſmote his knees one againſt another,* when he beheld the hand-writing againſt him upon the wall: that fear which made *Cain a fugitive and a vagabond in the Earth*; and drove *Ahitophel* and *Judas* to deſperation. This is ſo far from being a bleſſing, that it is a curſe, a vexation, a tormenting Fury which wicked men labour all they can to chaſe out of their hearts: but alas it is all in vain; it haunts them ſtill, and will never depart

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from them, till they depart from evil. Indeed perhaps it may ſometimes give them a little intermiſſion: but yet it returns again with the greater violence. No place is ſecure from it where wicked men can come; but it follows and purſues them every where; embitters all their joyes and pleaſures; torments them day and night, and affrights them even in their dreams. This is one fear of the Lord; but not that fear which is here meant in my Text: for if this be all the wiſdom man can attain to, ſurely then of all creatures he is the moſt miſerable.

But we may go a degree further ſtill, and yet come ſhort of the true Fear of God. For there are ſome men that ſo fear Him, as that they will endeavour to abſtain from groſs and ſcandalous ſins: but not out of any true love they have for God, or any hatred they bear to ſin; but meerly out of Self-intereſt, that they may (if poſſible) eſcape that vengeance which they know will one day be executed upon the Ungodly.

I will not ſay that this fear is in all men a ſin: for it is in ſome a Virtue, and if it be not the Wiſdom here in the Text, yet it is at leaſt a good ſtep toward the obtaining of it. For as it is a true Maxim, that no man can all

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of a ſudden become a moſt notorious ſinner: ſo it is as true one the contrary, that no man that hath been a ſinner (and ſuch we are all by Nature) can, without ſuch a miracle as was wrought at the Converſion of S. *Paul*, in the twinkling of an eye become a Saint of the firſt Magnitude. No, we muſt be content to acquire this perfection by degrees; we muſt creep, before we can go: be Babes in Chriſt before we can be ſtrong Men. We muſt *paſs from ſtrength to ſtrength*; from grace to grace, before we can *appear before God in Sion*. For certainly God would never have ſet before us Life and Death; never have propounded to us in his word Rewards and Puniſhments; nor have told us of a curſed and a bleſſed Eternity, if he did not allow us to fear the one, and to deſire the other.

Nay this fear of Gods wrath is ſo far from being unlawfull, that it is abſolutely neceſſary. We muſt receive *the Spirit of Bondage to fear, before we can have that of Adoption to cry, Abba, Father*. We muſt be affrighted by the ſeverity of the Law, that we may be ſenſible how great need we have of a Saviour. Our wounds muſt be cleanſed with a Corroſive before we pour in Oyl; and they muſt firſt ſmart with the Waters of *Marah*, before

before they be refreſhed with the Balm of *Gilead*. We muſt fear God as an angry Judge, before we can love him as a tender Father; and we muſt tremble at his Terrours before we can adore his Mercy.

But although this fear be good in thoſe Perſons who are carefull to improve it, and make it a ſtep to further Graces: yet it is ſinfull and wicked in all thoſe who reſt content with this, and never aim at any higher Perfection; but think that they are good Chriſtians, if they abſtain from ſome ſins meerly out of hopes to eſcape damnation; though they never had (nor intend to have) any zeal for the Glory of God, nor any hatred for Sin: nay though indeed they love it at their heart, and could wiſh that there were no God to condemn them, nor Hell to torment them, that ſo they might have a licenſe to *commit wickedneſs even with greedineſs*; to *drink iniquity like water*; and ſecurely gratifie all their luſts and corruptions. This is a ſecond degree of the fear of God; or indeed it is rather the fear of Hell; or to ſpeak moſt properly, 'tis the love of our ſelves.

I come now to ſhew you what the true fear of God is, that fear which the Text tells us is Wiſdom. And this is ſuch a fear of God as proceeds from love; nay indeed it is nothing

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elſe but love; not of our ſelves, as the former fear, but of God, as the onely object that can deſerve our affections; as the greateſt, the onely Good, and the ſole author and fountain of all our Happineſs. So then this Grace may be ſtiled indifferently either Fear or Love. And it is no myſtery neither, Fear being ever an inſeparable companion of Love. For he that loves fears nothing more then to offend the perſon whom he loves: and if he have the ill fortune to do it, is ready to ſubmit to any terms that will procure him a reconciliation. So it is with the Saints: they love God if not with an infinite, yet at leaſt with an ineffable love, far above all the World. And by how much the greater their Love is, ſo much the greater is their Fear too. So that if their Love be infinite (and it is ſo in reſpect of its Object, which is infinitely glorious and infinitely good) then the fear alſo which they have of miſcarrying in their Love, and diſpleaſing that infinite Majeſty which doth ſo well deſerve their Love and Adoration muſt be infinite too.

This is that Fear which ſupported *Job* under his mighty afflictions; enabled him to baffle all Satans deſigns; made him triumph over the fury and malice of Hell, and tranſported him to that incomparable expreſſion

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of the confidence he repoſed in his God, *Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him.* He knew that ſo long as he retained his integrity, however God ſeemed for the preſent to frown upon him, yet he would not *caſt him off for ever.* He knew that this ſtorm would ere long blow over, and that the ſun-ſhine of Gods favour would again enlighten him, and break through this black cloud, which for a while ſeemed to intercept it. But come what will on't; whether he live or die, he is reſolved both to live & to die in the Fear of the Lord. This is his Load-ſtar, by which like a skilfull Pilot he ſteers through the tempeſt. And though his riches have *made themſelves wings and are fled* from him: though his children be all ſlain in a moment: though his friends brand him for an Hypocrite, and the wife of his boſom rail againſt him, and give him that deſperate and helliſh counſell, to *curſe God and die*: though he is become a laughing-ſtock to thoſe Perſons *whoſe fathers once he would have diſdained to have ſet with the dogs of his flock*: though he be thus forſaken of all the world, *deſtitute, afflicted, tormented*, and in all outward appearance forſaken even of God himſelf too, and made a ruefull ſpectacle of his wrath and indignation; yet he *ſins not* for all this, *nor charges God fool*[illegible]

nay he cleaves to him the closer, well knowing that notwithstanding he seemed to be his enemy, he was still in reality his greatest, his onely friend. And therefore he worships him as well when *the days of affliction have taken hold on him*, as when *God preserved him, and made his candle to shine upon his head.* He adores him as much on the Dunghill as on the Throne; praises his Name as well when his head is covered with ashes, as if it wore a Diadem; and gives him thanks, when he hath left him nothing but a potsheard to scrape his sores, as heartily as when he made him *the greatest of all the men of the East*, and *crowned him with loving kindness and tender mercies.*

This I say is that fear which carried *Job* through such a sea of troubles, armed him against the strength and policy of Satan, and made him a glorious Conquerour over Principalities and Powers. A fear which is as comfortable, as the former is terrible. That represents God to us as the greatest evil, and drives us from him as from *a consuming fire*: this makes us long for him (as in reality he is) as the greatest Good, and wish that we *had wings like a Dove* that we might fly into his embraces. That is a fear of his Justice, and this of his Mercy; that a fear of punishment, and this of sin. In a word,

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that is a flash from Hell-fire, and this is a glimpse of the joyes of Heaven. This then is the true fear of God which is here meant in the Text, and that fear which every man must get into his heart, as he tenders his eternall Salvation. I do not say that every man shall be damned that attains not to that Seraphick Perfection which was in *Job*, and S. *Paul*, and many others of Gods most eminent Saints: but certainly this I may safely say, that whosoever doth not either actually attain to it, or else heartily bewail and lament his want of it, and earnestly beg of God that he would bestow it on him, is very far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

And now what I promised to shew you in the next place, *viz.* what it is *to depart from evil*, I have in some measure performed already: for this is a necessary consequence and fruit of the *fear of the Lord*. I shall therefore tell you onely in a word what this evil is which we must depart from; and that is sin: which, if we consider it aright, is the onely thing in the world which we can properly call evil. For every thing is good that God hath made, and God hath made every thing else but sin. That he utterly disclaims; 'tis the work of the Devil and Man, and not of God. Nay 'tis so far from

being a work of his, that it defaces and destroys his work. Tis a burden which wearies the whole Creation; yea and the Creatour himself too: for the Scripture tells us that because of this *it repented the Lord that he had made Man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.* The whole earth had been one continued and universall Paradise untill this day, had not sin turned it into a Desert. Tis this which hath *made the Heaven over our heads to be Brass, and the Earth under us to be Iron,* and caused it to bring forth *thorns and thistles* instead of *wheat and barley.* There had been no sickness, had not sin cursed the very food we put into our mouths, and made us eat our poison. There had been no death, had not sin armed him and sharpned his sting. There had been no Devil, had not sin blackt him; and there had been no Hell, had not sin kindled Gods wrath, and blown up that flame which never shall be quenched.

It remains then that sin, which is the cause of all this, is the onely true and reall evil in the world. And if so then surely to depart from such an evil must needs be Understanding, which brings me to the third and last particular,

Which is this, That to depart from this evil

vil of ſin in the Name and Fear of the Lord, is the greateſt wiſdom that Man is capable of. But then we muſt be ſure to do it in the fear of the Lord. For otherwiſe though we have never ſo ardent an affection and love for Virtue; though we depart from vice with never ſo much care and vigilancy (for wholly depart from it no man can) we ſhall ſtill be but fools in the end. To *fear God* and to *depart from evil* are inſeparable companions: they are conſtantly joined together in Scripture; and *what God hath joined let not Man put aſunder*. *Job* was *perfect and upright*, ſaith the Text, *one that feared God, and eſchewed evil*. *By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil*, ſaith *Solomon*. And if we will *perfect Holineſs*, S. *Paul* will tell us that it muſt be done *in the fear of God*. Theſe two are like Soul and Body; one cannot be compleat without the other. *Fear the Lord* aright we cannot, except we *depart from evil*: and we cannot *depart from evil*, except we *fear the Lord*. This crowns all our actions, and makes our weak and imperfect endeavours after Holineſs to be accepted of in Heaven, through the merits of Chriſt.

And now that thus to depart from Evil is our greateſt Wiſdom, what need I ſpend many words to prove? Methinks there ſhould

should be no man so destitute of reason as not readily to acknowledge it. But though we have all reason enough to discern the excellency of this Wisdom: yet in most men that is but a slave to their lusts, which tyrannize over them, and lead them captive with open eyes to meet their destruction. The ambitious man knows what a *Kingdom is prepared for the Saints from the foundation of the World*; and yet he will forfeit it for the breath of the Multitude. The Miser knows that it would be better for him to *lay up for himself treasures in Heaven* then upon Earth; and yet for all that he will *have his inheritance on this side Jordan*, and sell his Soul that he may enrich his Heir. The Swearer knows that *every one that swears shall be cut off*; and yet he prefers this gentile and modish embellishment of his discourse before all the Anthems and Musick of the Heavenly Chore. The Voluptuous man knows that the love of Christ to his Church *passes the love of Women*; and yet a smile from Beauty will move him more then all the melting entreaties and passionate importunities of a wooing Saviour. Thus though our reason acknowledges this Wisdom, yet our lusts disavow it; and most of us I fear, are as careless in the practise of it, as we are apt to be loud

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in its commendation. Seeing therefore that we have all by Nature such a propensity in us to gratifie our lust rather then to obey our reason; I hope as I shall encourage all those wise and happy Souls that have found this inestimable Treasure, to the carefull keeping of it; so I shall not deterr those unhappy Persons from seeking it that have hitherto despised it, if according to my ability I endeavour to evidence the worth of it briefly in these three following particulars. First, it will deliver us from the greatest Evil. Secondly, it will procure for us the greatest Good. And Thirdly, all other Wisdom without this is but meer folly, but this of it self alone, without the help and concurrence of any thing else, which the world calls Wisdom, is sufficient to make us happy.

First, This *departing from evil in the fear of the Lord* is our greatest Wisdom, because it will deliver us from the greatest evil both here, and hereafter; from Sin and Hell. This Fear secures us from all other fears whatsoever. He that fears not God fears every thing; and so long as he hath the Creatour for his enemy, thinks (as well he may) that the whole creation is armed against him for his destruction. There is nothing so mean and contemptible, but it can make him tremble.

tremble. He is jealous even of his own ſhadow, leſt it ſhould be ſome Imp ſent to devour him. He ſympathizes with every ſhaking leaf he hears, and *flees* (as *Solomon* ſpeaks) *when no man purſues him.* His heart miſgives him at every thing, and he hath ſuch a continuall faintneſs upon him, as God threatens to ſend upon the rebellious Iſraelites. He finds no true ſatisfaction in any thing; hath no comfort in any of his actions, nor in any of his hours: but *in the morning he ſaith would God it were evening, and in the evening, would God it were morning.* All the remedies he makes uſe of, ſo long as he neglects this one in my Text, are but like water given to one that is ſick of a feaver; ſo far from healing, that they augment and enrage his diſtemper. His Friends, his merry Companions, and his full Bowls however they may ſeem for a while to mitigate his pain, to deafen the cries of his guilty Conſcience, and ſtave off that worm which gnaws him; yet he will find in the end that he takes his meaſures falſe, and that he drinks his Poiſon inſtead of his Antidote. For Conſcience will ſtill cry, yea and cry the louder too, the more he endeavours thus to ſilence it. And that Worm, though perhaps it forbear a little; yet it will return again more fiercely

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then ever, and bite with a greater fury, with a ſharper appetite.

What folly then, what madneſs is this, to harbour ſuch an implacable enemy in our boſom, as will ſuffer us to enjoy no peace, nor comfort in this World; yea and will follow us into the next World too, and there torment us to Eternity! And if it be the greateſt folly to run into ſuch an unconceivable evil as this; then certainly on the contrary, it muſt needs be the greateſt wiſdom imaginable to avoid it: or if we be fallen into it, to make a ſpeedy eſcape out of it again. And to do this no other courſe can be taken but that which my Text here preſcribes to us, *To fear the Lord, and to depart from evil.*

But ſecondly, as this Wiſdom delivers us from the greateſt evil, ſo it procures for us alſo the greateſt good. To reſcue a man from danger, and afterwards to take no further care of him, is no extraordinary kindneſs. But as *Pharaoh* did by *Joſeph*, to exalt a man from a Priſon to a Palace; to knock off his iron ſhackles, and put him on a ring of gold; not onely to give him his freedom, but to make him Ruler over a mighty Kingdom, is a favour beyond all expectation. But this, and much more, doth this

Wisdom do for us. If it had onely rescued us from that everlasting misery to which we are all obnoxious; it had then been no common Benefactour: but it does more for us then so. It does not onely deliver us from Hell, but it entitles us to Heaven. It does not onely free us from the bondage and tyranny of Sin and Satan; but it advances us also *into the glorious liberty of the Children of God.* It does not onely pluck us from the jaws of that roaring Lion; but it lodges us safe and secure in the arms of our Saviour.

And now as he that hath not this Fear of God before his eyes fears every thing; so he that hath it fears nothing else, but God alone. This Fear arms and fortifies him against whatsoever appears to other men formidable. He cares not, though the whole world be his enemy, while God is his Friend. He is not to be won by its enticements, nor daunted by its threatnings: but he stands firm and unshaken upon this rock, exalted above its frowns and smiles.

Conscience, that is so terrible an enemy to him that fears not God, is his most faithfull friend (and it is as comfortable a friend, as it is a dreadfull enemy) It alwaies joyns with God, it is his Vice-roy to pronounce that sentence on Earth which he passes in Heaven.

Heaven. While this therefore tells him that *God is his refuge and strength*; he may say with the Psalmist what follows, *I will not fear though the Earth be removed, and though the Mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.* This will enable him to comport and demean himself like a Child of God in all conditions. It will teach him with S. *Paul, in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content.* This will sweeten every bitter cup. This will lighten the burden of his affliction. This will *make all his bed in his sickness.* This will fill him with joy even at the hour of his death, and enable him to deliver up his soul into the hand of God with comfort, and full assurance of a blessed Resurrection. And then in that *great and terrible day of the Lord, wherein the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat*; when the whole World shall tremble, and neither Heaven nor Earth be able to abide the dreadfull approach of that great Judge, but both *shall pass away* and be consumed before him; when *the Wicked shall call in vain to the Mountains and Rocks to fall on them, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn*: Then shall Conscience shew it self to be a most faithfull friend; embolden him to *lift up his head with joy*; plead for him against all his Accusers, and through the merits and mercy of Christ

acquit him at that grand Tribunal: Then ſhall this Wiſdom as it hath freed him from the greateſt evil, from ſin and hell; ſo alſo confer upon him the greateſt Good, and inveſt him with eternall Holineſs and Happineſs.

Thirdly and laſtly, All other Wiſdom without this is but meer Folly; but this of it ſelf alone, without the help and concurrence of any thing elſe which the world calls Wiſdom, is ſufficient to make us eternally happy. For in what elſe ſhall we place Wiſdom, if not in the *Fear of the Lord*? Shall we place it in pleaſures? Alas there are none to be found any where, but *at Gods right hand*. The pleaſures of this world are but torments: they ſeem perhaps to delight us a little for the preſent; but ſoon after they ſting us to the heart. Shall we place it in Riches? They are but fading and periſhing enjoyments, and muſt ſhortly leave us: and if they ſhould tarry with us never ſo long, the wiſe man tells us, that *they profit not in the day of wrath*. Shall we place it in Honour? there is nothing more uncertain then that: for though it be never ſo ſplendid and glorious for a while; yet it muſt ere long be *laid in the duſt*. Indeed Honour and Authority is ſo far from being an ordinary and in-

different thing; that if we consider it aright, it is perhaps the greatest temporal Blessing that God hath to bestow upon Man: and Kings and Rulers have this happiness above the rest of Mankind, that they have power to do more good in the world, and to bring greater glory to God then inferiour persons, and consequently may procure for themselves a more honourable Throne, and a brighter Crown in Heaven. All shall be there full of glory, and every one perfectly satisfied and content with his own condition: but yet there shall be a difference; and while some shall but twinkle as the Stars, others shall shine as the Sun. The meanest Subject that hath been loyal to his King, and obedient to his God, shall at the last day be rewarded with an incorruptible Crown; for we shall all be *Kings and Priests unto God.* But I know not any thing in Scripture that doth not freely permit a godly and religious Prince to hope to be as highly advanced above his Subjects in Heaven, as ever he was here one Earth, if he manages his Sceptre with this Wisdom here in my Text, which will be sure to establish his Throne, and make his Crown to flourish. Again, shall we place Wisdom in Learning? This also, if it be sanctified by Grace,

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is a very great Bleſſing: but without that it is as great a Curſe; without Grace it will but enable a man to ſin more powerfully: inſomuch that he that hath a learned head, and an unſanctified heart, may almoſt ſtand in competition with the Devil himſelf, who ſhould be the Maſter worker of iniquity, and gain moſt Proſelytes to the kingdom of Darkneſs. The ignoranteſt Peſant may make a ſorry ſhift to grope out his way to hell, even blindfold: but the learned Atheiſt ſees ſo many roads to it, that he will pick and chuſe his way ſo diſcreetly, as to be ſure to provide for himſelf one of the hotteſt places. S. *Paul* had continued a Perſecutour to his dying day, notwithſtanding all that Learning that he got *at the feet of Gamaliel*, had he not alſo learned Chriſt. And therefore he profeſſes this to be the onely true Wiſdom: for, ſaith he, *I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord*, Phil. 3. 8.

But to riſe yet one ſtep higher then Learning can advance us. Suppoſe God ſhould endue us with the Spirit of Propheſie to foretell things to come; or with a power to work Miracles and to caſt out devils; yet we ſhould be never the nearer to Heaven for all this, without the Wiſdom here in my Text. For one of theſe faculties was beſtowed

ſtowed on *Balaam*; and yet, for all his good wiſhes 'tis probable that he died not *the death of the Righteous*: and the other on *Judas*; and yet himſelf was *a Devil*. Alas what were we the better, if we knew the hour of our death; if we knew too that from that hour our everlaſting puniſhment ſhould bear its date? What would it profit us, though we knew the minute when the Archangel ſhould begin to ſound his Trump; if we knew withall that that ſound ſhould ſummon us to hear the Sentence of our eternall condemnation? Such Wiſdom as this would be ſo far from making us happy, that it would antedate our miſery, and torment us before the time. All other things then, ſo long as we want this *one thing* which *is needfull*, will be but weak Advocates to plead our cauſe before Chriſts Tribunal.

And as all the Wiſdom of the world will profit us nothing without this, ſo this of it ſelf alone is ſufficient to make us happy. He that hath never been either at *Rome* or *Athens*; nay though he knows not ſo much as one letter of the Alphabet, is wiſe enough, if he hath but learned the Croſs of Chriſt. He that is never ſo poor, hath wealth enough, if he be but *rich in Faith*; and though he appear to men *as having nothing, yet poſſeſſes all things*. *The Brother*

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of low degree, that is never ſo mean and contemptible in the eyes of the world, if he hath but this Wiſdom in the Text, is highly honourable in the ſight of God.

But to what purpoſe ſhould I ſpend any more words in illuſtrating the incomparable worth of this Wiſdom, which as it deſerves all, ſo it needs no commendation? I will therefore detain you no longer, but conclude all in the words of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, cap. 9. v. 23, 24. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Let not the Wiſe man glory in his Wiſdom, neither let the Mighty man glory in his Might; let not the Rich man glory in his Riches. But let him that glories glory in this, that he underſtands and knows me, that I am the Lord which exerciſe loving kindneſs, judgement, and righteouſneſs in the Earth: for in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord.*

FINIS.